RSA
Projects

Sponsored by

Environment Agency

Student Design Awards 2012/13

Improve Water Environments

Reduce water pollution and restore natural river features

Brief

Design or re-design a system, service, product or environment that tackles issues of water pollution and/or the effect of man made structures on our rivers.

The purpose of this project is to explore how designers can address the broad causes of the specific problem of pollution in water environments. Specifically, the Environment Agency asks you to consider how to:

- reduce the impact of man-made structures in water environments
- restore natural features to water environments
- reduce the impact of small and spread-out sources of water pollution

Scope

For the purposes of illustration only, the following would all be viable responses:

- a new or redesigned physical device or piece of infrastructure that would help reduce the impact that man-made riverside structures have on wildlife and habitat, particularly water-borne animals; and/or, would reduce the impact from household, business or highway drainage before it reaches a river, lake or the aquifers
- a behaviour change strategy and/or learning resource or toolkit
- an app or other digital technology solution that tackles pollution problems
- an urban or rural land use solution that reduces pollution and/or contamination
- a new approach to city, community, or business practice

… and many others are possible.

The Environment Agency is looking for design solutions that are suitable for dissemination and use in the UK. Designs could be applied in many places and settings, such as households, workplaces and/or public spaces, streets or farms. The design solutions could be of varying scale, from small to city scape or landscape. Ideally, responses will be designed so that they can become a real feature in the environment within the next 3-5 years. Pure graphic design and communication design solutions are less appropriate responses to this brief.

Awards

There are two awards available for this brief:

An RSA Fellows' Award of £1250.

Paid internship at the Environment Agency (EA)
Renumeration: £2500
Duration: six weeks
Location: tbc
The placement will support their transition from education to employment by fostering the personal development skills needed in a business environment. It will also include an element of 'design' work associated with the EA's business.

The internship is likely to be based in Bristol or Warrington. Other EA offices will also be considered to ease travel for the winning student/s.

If appropriate, the winning entrant/s will also have the opportunity to work with the Environment Agency team to develop and implement their project proposal.

Please note that the judging panel may decide on more than one winner and will allocate the award/s accordingly.

Submission requirements

Entries should comprise the following:

- up to four A3 boards (max. four) showing design development and final designs
- 'The Big Idea' – a short, typewritten text (max. 250 words, sans serif, 14pt type) that captures your idea and helps the jury to quickly understand your solution, the process by which you reached it and the benefits you believe it will create
- one sketchbook (photocopied pages from your sketchbook will be accepted) illustrating development of your solution in response to the brief

All work (except sketchbooks) should be submitted on A3 lightweight card or foam board and all items (boards, sketchbook, written statement) should have an RSA label on the back. Please do not submit work in plastic sleeves or in boxes. These requirements are in the interests of students to ensure the safety of their work whilst in storage and transit, and to ensure that it can be displayed for judging in an efficient manner.

Submissions are due by Friday, 22 March 2013 at 17:00. Please see the **Schedule of Key Dates** for further information.

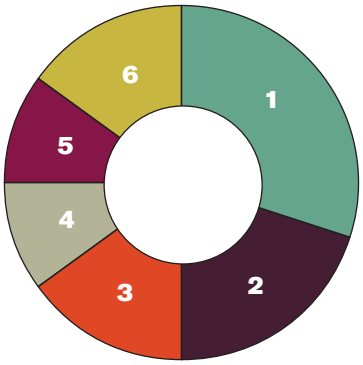
Further notes for entrants

You have a maximum of four A3 boards and a written summary not exceeding 250 words to communicate your solution to the judges. You have to distil your weeks or months of work into a story that is digestible in a short period of time. Imagine it like an advert and sell your work to the judges.

Any models or mock-ups should be submitted as photographs or print-outs mounted on one of your A3 boards – do not submit 3D work at this stage. If you are short-listed for interview, you are welcome to bring mock-ups and models, but for ease of judging at the first stage, only 2D material is accepted.

How this brief will be judged

1 Environmental and social benefit 30 %
2 Research 20 %
3 Design thinking 15 %
4 Commercial awareness 10 %
5 Execution 10 %
6 Magic 15 %



Judging Criteria

There are six judging criteria that your entry will be measured against:

1 **Environmental and social benefit**
How does your design benefit the water environment and dependent habitats?
2 **Research** Where did you go to research this issue? Whom did you speak to or interview? What questions did you ask? What did you learn?
3 **Design thinking** We want to know about your thought processes and insights. Your insights might be research-based or intuitive, or a combination of both, but the judges want to see you relate the final concept clearly to these insights. What journey did you go through to get to the final result?
4 **Commercial awareness** Does your design make sense from a financial point of view?
5 **Execution** We are looking for a design that is pleasing and looks and feels well-resolved
6 **Magic** We are looking for a bit of 'magic' – a surprising or lateral design solution that delights

Judging process

Please see the Entry Pack for more information on the judging process, including key dates you should be aware of through Spring 2013.

Background

Society and the environment need clean water for life. Across the UK there are many diffuse (small and dispersed) discharges of water that cumulatively harm our rivers, lakes and aquifers. They come from our homes, places of work and the land that we've changed. There are also many stretches of river bank that have been built on and are no longer favourable for wildlife.

Improving water environments has benefits for people, communities, wildlife and our economy. Securing these benefits is notoriously difficult to do because:

– multiple diffuse sources of water pollution affect our water environments e.g. dirty water running off streets and roads, mis-connected household and industrial drains and farming practices near water
– man has extensively changed river corridors by building in towns and cities. Structures such as culverts, walls and artificial river banks make much of our urban river corridor unattractive to wildlife

These challenges make it difficult for some of our water environments to achieve the legally required standards that will help environments thrive.

You may choose to tackle the brief by first examining your existing activities as an individual or as part of a household or community. Think about how you use water, where it goes afterwards, and what effect your activities have on local water environments. Is there a way that you can design a system that helps to reduce pollution arising from your own activities?

Your design solution may tackle issues of urban and/or rural land use. It might be suitable for a household, workplace, town, farm or other environment where actions and outputs have a knock-on effect. Alternatively, you may choose to review how water is managed in business, farms or households from supply to disposal at a property, bigger development or community level.

As part of your research, you may want to consider the effects of current influences, infrastructure and services on water environments, such as:

– sources and types of pollution
– the 'pathways' that pollutants travel down before reaching rivers, lakes, and aquifers
– the influences that man made structures e.g. walls, culverts, etc. have on wildlife habitat compared with natural river environments
– the solutions that are currently used e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs)

To help overcome environmental issues like water pollution, it is necessary to minimise pollutants at their source, as well as during consumption, disposal and transit. There is also a need to consider the systematic prevention or reduction of pollutants more widely. Could a community approach or wider behaviour change strategy achieve significant reductions in the causes and sources of water pollution in the UK as a way of tackling, on a local level, what is an urgent global issue?

Having insights into the ways that people live and work is at the centre of what designers do. Using these insights, designers can create the conditions for people to connect successfully with each other to promote positive changes in everyday life, such as reducing water pollution.

Sponsor information

The Environment Agency (EA) is a UK Government agency. Their work includes protecting and improving rivers, lakes, aquifers and coastal waters for people and wildlife. The EA's principal aims are to protect and improve the environment and to promote sustainable development. The EA plays a central role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government through its functions and roles.

The EA has taken a new approach to delivering innovation and environmental, social and economic benefits by working with other organisations to cultivate a collective understanding of the problems that water environments and associated habitats face. The EA aims to share data, information and resources to identify what causes problems and pollution in water environments so that they can better tackle them and develop a shared long-term plan for future action.

Improve Water Environments
Brief devised in collaboration with the Environment Agency: Damian Crilly, Environment & Business Manager; Paula Nickson, Senior Advisor – Business Innovation; and, Anthony Parsons, Business Innovation Manager.

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Schedule of Key Dates

Key Dates for submission of Entry Forms, Fees and work

Deadline for Entry Form(s) and Fee(s) for all projects

Friday 22 March 2013

Please register by this date using our new online registration system, available from January 2013 at www.thersa.org/sda

If registering by post, please ensure your Entry Form(s) and Fee(s) are postmarked by this date. Entry Form(s) and Fee(s) should be sent under separate cover – **not with your entry** – to:

RSA
Student Design Awards Registrations
8 John Adam Street
LONDON
WC2N 6EZ
UK

Submission period for all project entries

Monday 11 February – Friday 22 March 2013

Regardless if you register online or by post, you must send your entry in by post to Brooks Transport.

Entries will be accepted at Brooks Transport Services Ltd on any weekday within the dates stated above between 09:00–17:00, excluding weekends and bank holidays. Entries arriving after 17:00 on Friday 22 March 2013 may not be accepted.

Please remember that all entries should be sent or delivered to:

Brooks Transport Services Ltd
Unit 2/15
Second Avenue
Bluebridge Industrial Estate
Halstead
ESSEX
CO9 2SU
UK

All entry forms/fees should be sent or delivered to:

RSA
Student Design Awards Registrations
8 John Adam Street
LONDON
WC2N 6EZ
UK